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WILDLIFE SERVICES—MASSACHUSETTS

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USDA Resolves Wildlife Conflicts in Massachusetts

Massachusetts is heavily populated and ecologically diverse. On a daily basis, residents, industry professionals, organizations, and agencies call upon the Wildlife Services (WS) Massachusetts program for help and expertise in protecting agriculture, human health and safety, property, and natural resources from damage or threats caused by wildlife. In response WS provides technical assistance and implements biologically, environmentally, and socially sound wildlife damage management efforts in compliance with all applicable laws and regulations.

Top 5 Major Assistance Activities:

- Protecting civilian and military passengers and aircraft from wildlife collisions
- Protecting property and public health and safety from conflicts caused by Canada geese and gulls
- Protecting human and animal health from disease threats such as rabies
- Managing damage caused by gulls, pigeons, starlings, and blackbirds
- Alleviating depredation of State and Federally protected shorebirds

Top 5 WS Research Projects of Interest to Massachusetts:

- Managing and evaluating grass height at airports for optimum aircraft safety while preserving conditions to also benefit protected grassland birds
- Evaluating potential threats and hazards caused by the presence of snow buntings or similar birds at airports
- Research evaluation of wildlife rabies transmission and collaborative operational field application of rabies control techniques
- Evaluating the potential of skunks as a raccoon rabies reservoir species
- Managing bird presence at landfill facilities

Specific projects conducted by the WS Massachusetts program include: alleviating wildlife hazards at airports; reducing the rabies threat through oral rabies vaccination (ORV); reducing threats to human health and safety and property damage from Canada geese, gulls, and woodpeckers; reducing wildlife disease threats to livestock; and protecting natural resources from various types of wildlife damage.

Applying Science & Expertise to Wildlife Challenges

WS offers information, advice, equipment, and materials that enable many people to resolve wildlife conflicts on their own. Often, this *technical assistance* can be provided over the phone. WS may also provide cooperative on-site help, or *direct assistance*, to address complex wildlife problems that may be difficult or cannot be safely and effectively resolved by others. To support this effort, WS conducts *scientific research* across the Nation to develop answers to new problems posed by wildlife and to ensure the program benefits from the latest science and technology.

Protecting Agricultural Resources—

Although human population densities are increasing, agriculture remains economically and socially important to Massachusetts. WS continues to provide wildlife damage management expertise to a highly diversified agricultural industry across a variety of landscapes. These include vegetable, fruit, dairy, turf, ornamental, aquaculture, and livestock production ventures. These operations occur in urban, suburban, and rural settings, and produce locally consumed or exported crops.

WS Massachusetts personnel conduct seasonal projects in collaboration with the University of Massachusetts Extension System to manage starling contamination of feed and water at dairy farms, which can cause salmonella infections in cattle. Cattle infected with



salmonella may abort their calves, slow down or stop feeding, lose weight, and reduce milk production, causing great concern to producers in the dairy industry. In addition to cost savings from the reduction of contaminated or feed consumed by wildlife, dairy and feed lot farmers who participate in this WS program report improvements in the quality of their cattle and milk production.

Protecting Human Health and Safety at Airports—

Wildlife collisions with aircraft cost U.S. civil aviation more than \$550 million annually and pose a hazard to flight crews, passengers, and aircraft. The WS' National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC) conducts research from its Sandusky, OH field station to reduce wildlife hazards to aviation and reduce risks to air passengers. In Massachusetts, WS biologists provide training, wildlife hazard assessments, and direct wildlife management assistance at State airports through partnerships with airport management, State agencies, and other Federal agencies. In fiscal year (FY) 2006, WS conducted cooperative programs at two military and four State airports. During the same year, the program also conducted technical consultations at eight civilian airports. In addition, the WS Massachusetts program usually conducts at least two wildlife hazard management workshops for airport personnel each year based on demand.

Protecting Human Health & Safety from

Rabies—Since 2001 WS continues to support

the Cape Cod Oral Rabies Vaccination (CCORV) program in southeastern Massachusetts in collaboration with Tufts University, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, and the Barnstable County Department of Health and the Environment. Initiated in 1994, the program was designed to prevent the spread of rabies to Cape Cod, a heavily populated tourist destination south of Boston. Cooperative activities include oral rabies vaccine (ORV) bait distribution, surveillance activities, training, and small-scale studies.

In response to the March 2004 Cape Cod rabies outbreak, enhanced rabies surveillance was conducted to facilitate rabies management decision making. WS and CCORV cooperators submitted for testing more than 1,500 rabies suspect “sick-acting” or dead animals. To combat the spread of rabies across Cape Cod, WS and CCORV cooperators distributed over 300,000 ORV baits. Currently, WS and CCORV cooperators are working to implement new strategies for rabies control in cooperation with USDA National Rabies Management program.

Wildlife Disease Management—To enhance preparedness for emergency disease response WS continues to collaborate with USDA, Veterinary Services (VS) and several state and local health agencies. Several interagency meetings and table-top exercises have been conducted, which have significantly improved communications and strategies for responding to potential disease emergencies.

Avian influenza (AI), or bird flu, is a disease caused by a virus, which can infect domestic poultry and wild birds (geese and ducks and shorebirds). Each year, there is a bird flu season just as there is for humans and, as with people, some forms of flu are worse than others.

Major Cooperators

- Individual Massachusetts Agricultural Producers
- Massachusetts Division of Agricultural Resources
- Massport Airport Operations
- Westover Air Reserve Base
- Otis Air National Guard Base
- Massachusetts Department of Public Health
- Barnstable County Department of Health and Environment
- Tufts University Animal Hospital
- Multiple Town Public and Residential Develop Offices for Canada Goose Control

The highly pathogenic H5N1 strain of bird flu has been found in increased numbers of countries in Europe, Asia and Africa. Currently, highly pathogenic H5N1 avian influenza is not present in the United States although it may spread to this country. The U.S. Government is taking steps to prepare for and minimize the potential impact of this disease.

During FY06, WS participated as the U.S. Department of Agriculture and U.S. Department of Interior initiated an enhanced proactive interagency program to monitor wild migratory birds in the United States. The program also tested statistically significant samples of migratory bird species for avian influenza. WS Massachusetts is working collaboratively with State agencies and other public and private organizations to conduct surveillance activities for avian influenza in wild migratory birds.

Protecting Federally Endangered Piping Plovers—During 2006 WS assisted the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife in managing fox and skunk predation on federally protected piping plovers, and other shorebirds that nest on Plymouth, Massachusetts, beach areas. WS and the Division of Wildlife, working together under a cooperative agreement, have been able to reduce predation of shorebirds and enhance nesting success of these protected bird species.

Protecting Multiple Resources from Canada Goose Damage—For the past 30-years, Canada goose populations have increased in Massachusetts and continue to present a major wildlife problem. Many traditional management methods are showing limited effectiveness as goose populations continue to grow. Massachusetts WS recommends the use of integrated wildlife damage management in which several effective methods are used in combination to alleviate goose damage. Methods include combining habitat management, exclusion, harassment, and repellants. Meanwhile, WS’ NWRC is working to develop socially acceptable and effective management methods. WS program specialists currently conduct integrated programs with towns and homeowner associations to reduce the reproduction success of local geese. In FY06, Massachusetts WS conducted 107 consultations and resource loss evaluations regarding Canada geese and provided recommendations associated with application for depredation permits at no charge.

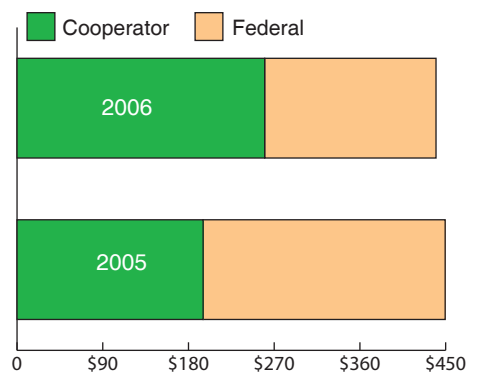
Looking to the Future

WS continues to provide citizens of Massachusetts with safe, effective, and humane assistance for a variety of wildlife conflicts through cooperatively funded wildlife damage management activities. A major concern will be preventing the spread of wildlife-borne diseases such as rabies, tularemia, salmonella, giardia, and E. coli. WS will meet new wildlife damage management challenges to the dynamic Massachusetts agricultural industry and continue to improve strategies for reducing wildlife hazards at airports.

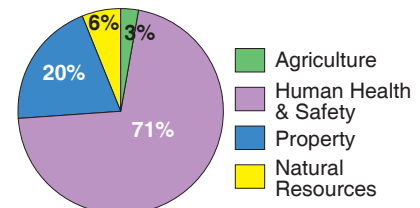
Massachusetts Wildlife Services Funding

In addition to receiving federally allocated funds, WS also receives money from cooperators who have a vested interest in the program: producers, private individuals, businesses, and other Federal, State, and Local government agencies. In most cases, these cooperators need help to resolve wildlife damage problems or they play a role in wildlife damage management.

Total Funding (Thousands)



Resources Protected % of Total Funds



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